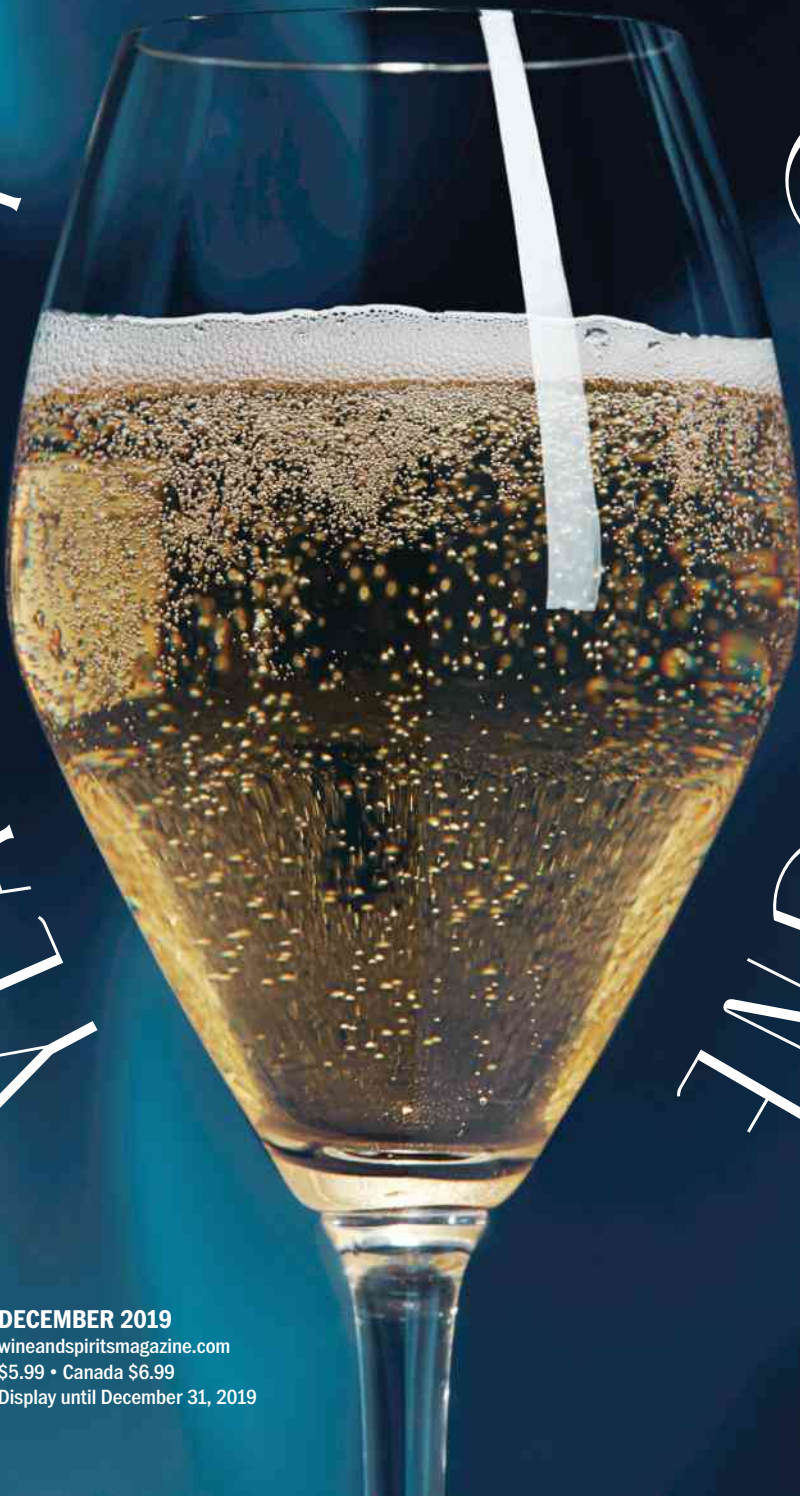


NAPA'S ENDANGERED OLD-VINE CABERNET

# Wine & Spirits

YEAR'S BEST

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# YEAR'S BEST HUNGARIAN WINES

Our blind panels tasted **84** Hungarian wines over the past 12 months. **Tara Q. Thomas**, our critic for Hungary, rated **24** as exceptional (90+) and **10** as Best Buys. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

## WHITE

**93 | Attila Homonna** \$61  
**2016 Tokaji Rány Furmint** Based in Erdobénye, Attila Homonna focuses on dry wines from furmint. He began building his collection of old vines in 1999 and now has 8.6 acres, which he farms without synthetic chemical inputs. This one comes from a particularly stony parcel of rhyolite soils and it tastes like the colors of a sunset, with warm rays of red, orange and golden fruit. It's stony in the center, nutty and tangy, with hints of smoked paprika and candied orange. Then racy acidity wraps it all up in a clean, dry finish. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

**93 | Attila Homonna** \$36  
**2017 Tokaji Estate Selection** Homonna softens the fiery spice and structure of furmint with a little juicy, floral hárslevelu, creating an intense white that delivers a tidal wave of flavor with each sip. It's earthy, spicy and ripe, with a peach-skin rasp to the texture that gives it extra purchase on the palate. The flavors last with a red-fruited glow, the wine suited to pairing with meat, particularly roast pork. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

**92 | Gilvesy** \$18  
**2016 Balatoni Bohém Riesling Cuvée (Best Buy)** An architect by training, Robert Gilvesy started this label in 2012, restoring the ruins of the 18th-century Esterházy winery into a contemporary showcase. He now hosts an annual summer wine festival, the Bohém Légyott ("Bohemian Fly"); his Bohém Cuvée is the sort of wine you'd want to be drinking on the lawn. The blend is based on welschriesling along with sauvignon blanc, pinot gris and riesling; it's crisp and mineral, with a salinity that plays up the succulence of its limey, peachy fruit. Sweet in the middle, it ends clean, with a verve that encourages another sip. *3W Beverage Importer, Washington, DC*

**92 | Samuel Tinon** \$60  
**2009 Tokaji Szamorodni** Samuel Tinon, a Frenchman who's lived in Tokaj for nearly 20

years, is a staunch supporter of the region's traditional Szamorodni wines, made from grapes of mixed ripeness levels, including some botrytized berries. This one, fermented with ambient yeasts, was aged in 220-liter barrels for many years, where it developed a layer of yeasts, like the flor of Fino Sherry. It's dry and spicy, with a bewitching combination of salted-nut flavor and apple-leather fruitiness. Intense and cleanly delineated by its alcohol (14.6 percent) and acidity, it would be delicious with a cheese course—or a simple bowl of mixed nuts. *Danch & Granger Selections, Los Altos, CA*

**91 | Moric** \$35  
**2017 Somló Hidden Treasures HID 2** Based in Austria's Burgenland, Roland Velich works with lesser-known winemaking talents and indigenous varieties for his Hidden Treasures wines. This one comes from Somló in Hungary, where he teamed up with Tamás Kis of Somló Vándor (whose wines are also recommended here). They blended this from hárslevelu, furmint and welschriesling, producing a fascinating white, ripe but not sweet, with flavors of rambutan and quince scented with lanolin, clove and a hint of smoke. The way it develops in the glass suggests this is best served decanted, and with something rich to eat, like pike in a cream sauce. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*



**90 | Oremus** \$27  
**2017 Tokaji Mandolás Furmint** Fermented and aged in oak, this is substantial and showy, with a flinty smokiness that fades into scents of lilies and lemon. At the same time, the acidity is brisk, the wine strident in

its drive; a dramatic Tokaji for pairing with anything from fried chicken to a creamy veal stew. *Europvin USA, Van Nuys, CA*

**91 | Lenkey Pincészet** \$38  
**2005 Tokaji Birtok Hárslevelú** It would be hard to find a white wine so well aged for this price anywhere in the world. This one is ripe and round, as is typical for hárslevelú, and has mellowed into golden flavors of apple and baked pear, with a marzipan richness. Bright acidity gives it lift and drive and suggests this could stand up to foods as rich as roast duck. *Palinkerie/Fine Hungarian Imports, Brooklyn, NY*

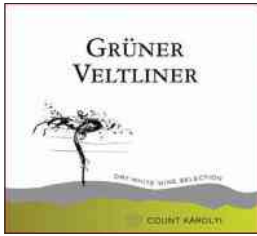
**91 | Somló Vándor** \$25  
**2017 Nagy-Somló Juhfark** Somló Vándor means "Somlo Wanderer," a nod to Tamás Kis's travels before deciding to settle in Somló to establish his winery in 2010. He now farms 12 acres of vines, mostly juhfark, a highly acidic local variety. He barrel ferments this wine with ambient yeasts, producing a 2017 that's rounded and richly textured, with a reductive, flinty note. It's savory, with an arrow of acidity that would cut through a pork roast or meaty roast fish. *Palinkerie/Fine Hungarian Imports, Brooklyn, NY*

**90 | Apátsági** \$30  
**2016 Somló Juhfark** Hail took out 70 percent of Zoltán Balogh's production in 2016, but the juhfark that remained made a beautiful wine. It's spicy and intense, with golden-fruit flavors and chamomile notes; it's also slightly bitter, with a tea-tree-oil note that contrasts its rich texture. Pour it like you might a German Spätlese trocken riesling, with a rich fish dish or white meats. *Danch & Granger Selections, Los Altos Hills, CA*

**90 | Gál Tibor** \$15  
**2018 Eger Egri Csillag (Best Buy)** In 2010, a coalition of Eger vintners introduced Egri Csillag as a white-wine counterpart to Egri Bikaver, Eger's famous "bull's blood" red. This 2018 blends királyleányka, welschriesling, szürkebarát, traminer, viognier, zenit and both pinot and sauvignon blanc, all vinified separately in stainless-steel tanks. Together, they offer immediate pleasure, earthy and rich, with fruit-skin tannins and spice balancing its tropical-fruit zeal. It finishes cleanly, with a refreshing edge of acidity. *Palinkerie/Fine Hungarian Imports, Brooklyn, NY*

**87 | Chateau Dereszla** \$18  
**2017 Tokaji Dry (Best Buy)** This is sweet

and green, with muscat-like notes of litchi candy. Ending clean, it's a simple white to chill for aperitifs. *Cognac One, NY*



**86 | Count Károlyi** \$12  
**2018 Pannon Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy)** Round and lemony with a white-pepper spice, this is soft and easy; for takeout Chinese. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*

ROSÉ

**90 | Sauska** \$15  
**2018 Villány Rosé (Best Buy)** A deep-pink rosé, this is nearly half kékfrankos, blended with merlot, kadarka, pinot noir and syrah. It's juicy with tangy strawberry and cranberry flavors, and "so crushable you might miss the complexity," as one of our tasters said. That complexity comes through in a floral pink peppercorn spice, and notes of stones and herbs, with an acidity that brings it clarity and finesse. *Sauska Wines, Milford, CT*

RED

**92 | Sauska** \$47  
**2015 Villány Cuvée 7** Villány is Hungary's southernmost winemaking region, a sunny place that's become known for cabernets sauvignon and franc. This is a blend of both (65/25) with 10 percent merlot, fermented in stainless-steel tanks and then aged for 15 months in barrels. Its plump, dark-currant flavors show the warmth of Villány's summer, the wine's lushness played up with smoky, spicy, toasted oak. At the same time, the wine feels firm, structured by crisp acidity and savory notes of stone and earth. *Sauska Wines, Milford, CT*

**92 | Sziegl** \$28  
**2017 Hajós Herreberg Kadarka** As young couple, Petra and Balázs Sziegl founded their winery in 2012, now farming 12 acres in the sandy soils of Hajós, a town about 100 miles south of Budapest. This comes from an old vineyard that has a reputation as a grand cru among the locals, with short bush vines. The 2017 was hand-picked in two sessions, four days apart, and fermented in open vats

before being pressed off into used oak barrels to age for eight months. The result is soft and velvety, with meaty, spicy notes infiltrating its rosy pomegranate flavor. *Danch & Granger Selections, Los Altos Hills, CA*

**91 | St. Andrea** \$52  
**2015 Eger Egri Bikavér Grand Superior Merengő** The Lörincz family has been at the forefront of the push to improve the image of Egri Bikavér, Eger's most famous wine, since they launched their winery in 1999. This is their flagship cuvée, a barrel selection based on kékfrankos with additions of cabernet franc, merlot, syrah and pinot noir. While oak aging informs the flavors, adding spice and caramel to its cherry-compote fruit, it doesn't overwhelm the savory details that make the wine compelling. It has an Old World elegance, with a smooth texture that's easy to enjoy now. *3W Beverage Importer, Washington, DC*

**90 | Heimann** \$25  
**2018 Szekszárd Kadarka (Best Buy)** At first, this kadarka comes across light and herbal, with a springtime freshness to its purple fruit. Then a humid earthiness rises to fill it out, the wine turning gamey, with peppery spice, which gives it a rustic appeal. It's fun and versatile, ready for a picnic with sliced meats or white-tablecloth meal of roast duck. *Danch & Granger Selections, Los Altos Hills, CA*

**90 | Sauska** \$25  
**2015 Villány Kékfrankos (Best Buy)** This is a spicy, brisk kékfrankos, a grape variety known as blaufränkisch in nearby Austria. Some toasty oak adds richness to the plummy fruit but doesn't mask its freshness; the wine feels polished and firm. *Sauska Wines, Milford, CT*

**88 | Sauska** \$25  
**2016 Villány Kadarka (Best Buy)** This is light in color and flavor, with a cinnamon-like spice warming its translucent baked-cherry flavors. Its weight and autumnal flavors would make it a welcome addition to a holiday turkey dinner. *Sauska Wines, Milford, CT*

DESSERT

**95 | Disznókó** \$160/500ml  
**2015 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos Kapi** Disznókó owns 256 contiguous acres of land, all of it surrounding the winery. There is one spot with the lightest soils of the estate, with a high percentage of rhyolite. In excep-

tional vintages, cellarmaster László Mészáros bottles this parcel separately. The 2015 season, with a hot summer followed by a long, warm autumn, produced a gorgeous wine, long, lean and spicy. It feels intensely flavorful more than directly sweet, the notes of floral honey and candied citrus balanced by notes of tea tree, lovage and fresh mushrooms. The acidity seems to render the sugar content weightless, the wine lasting with a liling delicacy. Only 4,991 bottles produced. *Monsieur Touton Selection, NY*

**95 | Lenkey Pincészet** \$100  
**2000 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos** Tokaj's 2000 vintage is considered one of the best in the last 20 years, with a hot summer followed by late-season rains that invited plenty of botrytis. This wine, made by Geza Lenkey and finished by Geza Jr, who took over after his father's death in 2001, shows off the power and delicacy of the vintage. While it has 174 grams per liter of residual sugar (balanced by 8.9 grams per liter of acidity), it's not at all heavy. The intensity comes, instead, in the wine's detail and concentration, notes of grassy herbs and warm spice, fresh mushrooms and damp stone all drawn together in honeyed richness. And at nearly 20 years old, it still feels youthful. *Palinkerie/Fine Hungarian Imports, Brooklyn, NY*



**94 | Disznókó** \$20/500ml  
**2017 Tokaji Late Harvest (Best Buy)** This wine refutes the generally held notion that late-harvest Tokaji is never as profound as an aszú variation. "It's transporting," said one of our panelists, pulling out of a reverie involving wildflower fields and honeybees buzzing while the sun sets in a blaze of gold...It might not evoke the same images for everyone, but there's undeniable pleasure in its smoky, spicy golden-fruit flavors and velvety, mouth-filling texture, and in how the citrusy acidity manages to keep the wine simultaneously buoyant. The flavors last in a warm afterglow of red-blushed flavor and earth, furmint's fiery side rendered with beauty. *Monsieur Touton Selection, NY*